



BEHIND BAARS

A publication of
The Bay Area Amphibian and Reptile Society
sponsored by the Palo Alto Junior Museum
1451 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto, CA 94301
Vol 7 (July 2007)
(408) 450-0759 (BAARS Voice-mail phone)

THE VALUE OF COLOR MORPHS

Color morphs are simply the way Mother Nature (or God, or evolution, if I may bring up such non-politically-correct terms here!) selects for survival characteristics, plus adding in a few genetic miscues now 'n then. In most animals including humans, there seems to be a great deal of left-over genetic info that is either not now used, or is used early in an embryo's development, or maybe we simply aren't bright enough to understand exactly what some parts of the genetic code do. As an aside, this color variance is not under the conscious control of either the animal or its environment. Each birthing brings forth various colors from a given litter and a few such morphs get killed and eaten less often than others. Evolution is simple if not individually kind.

In any case, closer to home (our home) I've mentioned before that the main local reptile predator is the Great Basin Gopher snake (*Pituophis catenifer deserticola*). And not surprisingly, this fairly large rat snake comes in a whole variety of shades, apparently dependent on the local surroundings, and maybe a couple of other less apparent factors. This subspecies is mainly tan with cryptic patterning in deep brown and a creamy white belly. But our local variant also typically has a 'wash' of orange down its sides and across the back half of the body in greater or less abundance. This gives the snake an almost Cape-Gopher-like appearance and matches our sandstone rock and desert scrub-vegetation pretty closely.

The odd thing is, many of the local lizards also display this tan-with orange-flecks on their bodies, so there is apparently something about that combination that allows the animals to survive slightly better than those without it. Of course, in any given batch of newborn, the genetic lottery says there will likely be all types, but the orange-flecked reptiles tend to dominate around here. And as I say that, a baby Gopher just showed up (found a mile or so away by a co-worker of my daughter) that is absolutely plain-tan, with brown patterns; not a trace of bright colors. Typically, we adopted it anyway.

But just when you have it mostly figured out and think you understand what's going on, I was told that a few such local gopher snakes do not display the orange flecks until they're several years old while others have heavy orange markings apparent upon being born. So there's a bit more going on than the simplistic description I gave at the end of the first paragraph above. At this time, we are keeping a plain tan specimen some 6 ft long from extreme west Texas, a 3-ft long heavily orange-washed Great Basin type from only yards away from our door, and a plain tan close to-newborn snake from a mile down the road. The Texas snake will likely not develop any bright colors since at his size, he's about finished with growing (except in girth).

The 2-year-old orange morph has the potential of becoming a spectacular individual since he already has far more orange than I've ever seen on a Great Basin Gopher snake. We'll see if the baby individual develops any color- so far, there's nothing at all. More importantly, all three eat F&Th. rodents like starving wolves but have never shown the slightest urge to bite humans- so far. So their pet-potential is high regardless of their coloration. Further, we once had a plain tan Pacific Gopher from Morgan Hill CA that behaved the same and lived for twenty-six years in our home, so showy colors aren't everything- health and longevity counts, too.

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BAARS CALENDAR- middle of year 2007

- July 6 BAARS Board Meeting- @ Scott & Madeleine's S.J home
- July 27 Regular BAARS meeting at Cubberley Community Center, Palo Alto
BRING YOUR FAVORITE HERP NIGHT!
- Aug 3 BAARS Board Meeting- @
- Aug 24 Regular BAARS meeting at Cubberley Community Center, Palo Alto
Speaker: TBD
- Aug 18 Reptile Show at Palo Alto Jr Museum Call Scott Alexander for info
(NOTE CHANGED DATE)
- Sept 7 BAARS Board Meeting- @
- Sept 28 Regular BAARS meeting at Cubberley Community Center, Palo Alto
Speaker: TBD

Animals adopted in June via BAARS:

- 1 lg female Red-eared Slider turtle
- 1 lg male Red-eared Slider turtle
- 4 small Red-eared Slider turtles
- 1 bearded dragon w/eye handicap
- 1 Fire-belly toad
- 1 8' long, 27-lb Red-tail boa
- 1 CA Desert tortoise
- 1 Russian tortoise
- 1 female adult green iguana

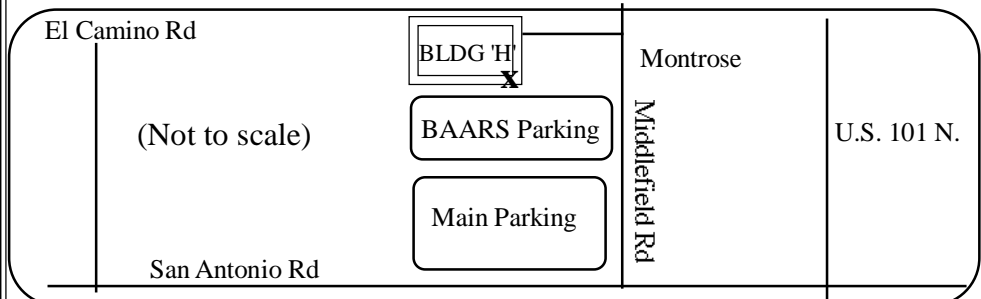
CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL WHO MADE THIS HAPPEN!! (mostly Dianne Flagg, I suspect.)

General Meeting Information

Meetings are held at Cubberley Community Center
4000 Middlefield Rd, Bldg H-1, Palo Alto CA
Meetings are on the 4th Friday of each month, except for Nov and Dec.
Meeting starts promptly at 8PM; doors open @ 7:30 PM
Annual Meeting & Holiday Party is held on the 2nd Friday of December

Meeting Guidelines

All people attending meetings must be quietly seated except for the social break in the middle. This is to ensure the speedy completion of the business portion of the meeting, as well as in consideration of our speaker(s). ALL animals brought to the meeting must be in suitable containers, including a source of heat if req'd.
All animals must be kept in their containers during the business portion of the meeting. Aggressive animals, sick or in-shed animals or delicate animals, should not be brought to the meeting, both for their sake and that of the humans attending.



BAARS President's Message

JULY '07

Hey All

First of all, I'd like to thank Al Wolfe and Bonnie Cromwell from Sonoma County Reptile Rescue, for speaking at our last general meeting (June). For those of you who missed the meeting, it was quite a treat. At one point, Al poured out 7-8 rattlesnakes out of bucket, onto the floor of our meeting hall. That got everyone's attention. These snakes represented about how many rattlesnakes that he collects on a given day(in the Summer).

Our general meeting this month (July) will be a "bring your favorite Herp night". I'm looking forward to the opportunity to mingle and talk about reptiles. I'm hoping that some of the old-timers come on down, as well as some newbies. I'll be bringing one of radiated tortoises, and a prehensile-tailed skink (my Baby, named 'Jade').

I'd also like to thank everyone for the great turnout at Sulphur Creek. We had about a dozen BAARS members, and it was really great. Our next educational show is currently on Aug 18th, at the Palo Alto Jr Museum, and I'd like to encourage everyone to come.

On a personal front, I'm trying to down-size and match up animals so that I'm positioned to breed them. I don't want to keep reptiles just for the sake of having them per se

I want to be able to produce them, educate people on their characteristics, and lessen the demand for wild-caught animals.

(1) I'm looking for one or two female prehensile tailed skinks, to start up a breeding colony. I currently have 3, including two confirmed males, so I have one excess male, which is about 2 years old. I've had my big male for about 16 years now, and really want him to produce some babies.

(2) My Vietnamese pond turtle (male) is excess, so I'm looking to place him in a breeding arrangement somewhere

(3) I also have 4 hatchling Indian Star tortoises, cute little devils which really don't fit into my immediate breeding plans. I would let a few of these go for a reasonable price....

(4) Finally, I would like to pick up some Burmese stars and Radiated tortoises, as well as additional Sulawesi Forest turtles, if anyone has a source for these.

Sincerely,
Scott Alexander



**ALL YOUR
REPTILE AND
PET
NEEDS**

**HOURS:
MON-FRI: 9AM-7PM
SAT: 9AM-7PM
SUN: 11AM-4PM**

Junior: Zavala
925. S. MAIN ST. SALINAS CA. 93901
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www.jurassicpets.net
www.myspace.com/jurassicpets

THE SILENT AND INSCRUTABLE TORTOISE?

OK, first off, the above title is with tongue firmly wedged in cheek.... surprising to many herp- fanciers, our solitary 12-year old Sulcata tortoise is far from silent! In fact, if he's at all typical, it should be possible to hunt Sulcatas in the wild simply by the incredible noises they make!

Some or many of the sounds may come from the fact that he is very well-fed, but to put it delicately, this being a family publication, our Sulcata desperately needs a daily dose of 'Beano' anti-flatulence medicine, if I knew it was safe to give him! However, I can't get any vets to condone this, in fact most burst out laughing when the question is asked. See, this kind of info in your BAARS newsletter is stuff you'll likely never see elsewhere! We cover it all.....

Any farm kids reading this will already know that grass-eating ruminants such as cattle and goats pass an inordinate amount of food-related 'gasses', mostly smelly, global-warming methane or sulphur-containing compounds (more familiar as those coming from over-ripe eggs). These last are directly related to gastric breakdown of proteins in an animals food and are controllable by simply not including them in your tortoise's diet-at least in any quantities.

And it seems from our experience with Fred the Sulcata, that tortoises should be included in that group of greenhouse-gas-emitters. Clean-ups at his present size are odorous in the extreme! Further, after he retires to his hide each evening (a standard plastic doghouse- for the time being, his shell now being within an inch of the doorway width), within it erupts groans and 'other noises' sufficiently loud to haunt a house if he was underneath it and the owners were not aware of the source.

The volume of noise is sufficient that the groans, moans and 'other' sounds can be heard from a good 50 feet away! So much for the 'silent' tortoise part. We never noticed this 'behavior' when he was young and small, and the much smaller Blue Spot, our famous three-legged California Desert tortoise, or our latest adoption- Boris the 5" adult Russian tortoise, do not demonstrate this talent.... yet.

So it may be simply a function of Fred's size and the prodigious volumes of greenery he consumes each day. As I said, no Sulcata breeders ever happened to mention this talent in their glowing books on the animals as pets, either....

Fred's diet is currently about 6 full heads of Romaine lettuce per day, supplemented with maybe a half-head of kale (too much of this leaf causes gout in tortoises from the oxalic acid kale and its related greens contain), two or three ears of sweet corn, zucchini in season and whatever he consumes grazing around in his grassy pen with the many small fruit trees and berry bushes we've planted for him.

The 'windfall-fruits' he manages to get this way only occur in the Fall, so I know that these available extras such as plums, several kinds of berries and apples are not causing his innards-commotion. So likely it's simply a function of his digestive system- something we are apparently able to significantly affect. Of course, Fred simply doesn't care.. C'est la vie....

And speaking of the husbandry required for such giant tortoises (the Sulcata is generally regarded as the smallest of the six 'giant' tortoises), I'm told that Fred's appetite will only increase, he being about 1/3-grown at this point in his projected 70+ year lifespan. Which of course means that likely Judy and I will be visited soon by the global-warming zealots concerning the enlarging hole in the ozone layer above Fred's summer pen....

Luckily, when he's brought inside the house for his 5-month estivation-nap during our cold Nevada winters, he doesn't eat or drink at all. No food in, no "emissions" out (once his system is cleared out, of course). Otherwise, I'd probably be thinking of constructing a heated concrete outdoor house all his own by now. Or perhaps a Ford catalytic converter attached to the warm tote-box in our closet!

J DeRyke

The First Annual
River Harvest Festival

Benefit for the National Reptile Foundation
Reptile Show & Dance

Music by: The Funkanauts, Haladea, Win Strong, and others

July 21st, 2007
10am - 10pm
Cotton Auditorium, Fort Bragg, CA



Sponsors include:

International Reptile Conservation Foundation
The Corn Snake Pit ~ ReptileUV.com ~ Haladea
Mendocino Cookie Company ~ KMFB-FM
Harvest Market ~ Thanks Giving Coffee
DragonSparkle.com ~ NeverSinkAgain.com
Dynamic Graphics ~ BAARS

Get your tickets at
www.TICKETFISHER.com

\$40.00 IN ADVANCE
\$45.00 AT THE DOOR

\$10.00 discount per ticket
for National Reptile Foundation members

~~~~~  
**Raffle and Silent Auction**  
**over 40 donated raffle prizes**  
**Raffle tickets: \$2 each or 10/\$10**

~~~~~  
We need more Vendors

Home made natural things,
Solar, Organic farmers market,
Good for the Planet, Eco friendly stuff,
and people that believe in this way of life.

-- This IS a reptile show --
BRING YOUR REPTILES!

(NOTE: Please do NOT bring any other animals such as DOGS.)

Call Lisa at 707-964-4881 or Email at: zenzoo@comcast.net

- to register your reptile
- to reserve a booth (vendor or educational)
- to purchase raffle tickets (you don't need to be present to win)

<http://www.RiverHarvestFestival.com>
<http://www.NationalReptileFoundation.org>

OPINIONS WANTED:

Is there a park you like to visit? BAARS would like to hear about the place.

We are planning an upcoming Saturday family/kid - friendly event for BAARS members and friends. We are planning to include a picnic/pot luck event, which will also include some herping activities.

What we need is input from all BAARS members is info for good locations for such an event, and the best weekend(s) to have it.

An ideal location would be within 40 miles of Palo Alto, will have good or at least useable picnic facilities, and terrain that would be herp-friendly so that the kids will get to see native animals in their natural environments.

All suggestions are welcome, even if they don't meet the ideal location, and even if you do not plan to attend such an event.

If you have an idea, email it to any BAARS board member (check out list of board members at

<www.baars.org/board.html>

or to

<BAARS.admin@gmail.com>

Thanks for your inputs!

BAARS NOTES

Classified ads

Classified ads are free for members (\$5/mo for non-members)

Display ad rates:

\$7.00 Business card size

\$11.50 1/6 page

\$22.50 1/3 page

\$35.00 1/2 page insert

\$70.00 full pg insert

All display ads should be camera-ready. Electronic submissions should be saved as postscript format (.pdf) for best image quality.

Live Food Items

Feeder animals may be available at the regular meetings. It's recommended that you bring your own containers for transport home.

Frozen Rodents are sometimes available through BAARS as a Group Buy. Details will be available at the meetings.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual/Family \$25/yr | <input type="checkbox"/> Contributing \$50/yr |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining \$35/yr | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron \$100/yr |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Institutional (schools, libraries, non-profit org, service org) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NEW MEMBER | <input type="checkbox"/> RENEWAL/CHANGE OF ADDRESS |

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE NUMBER/AREA CODE: (_____) _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP CODE: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

HERPETOLOGICAL INTERESTS _____

For more info, visit our website: <http://www.baars.org/index.html>

To join BAARS, mail this application, with your check to:

BAARS MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

c/o

Palo Alto Jr Museum
1451 Middlefield Rd
Palo Alto, CA
94301-3351



ADOPTIONS & FOR-SALE

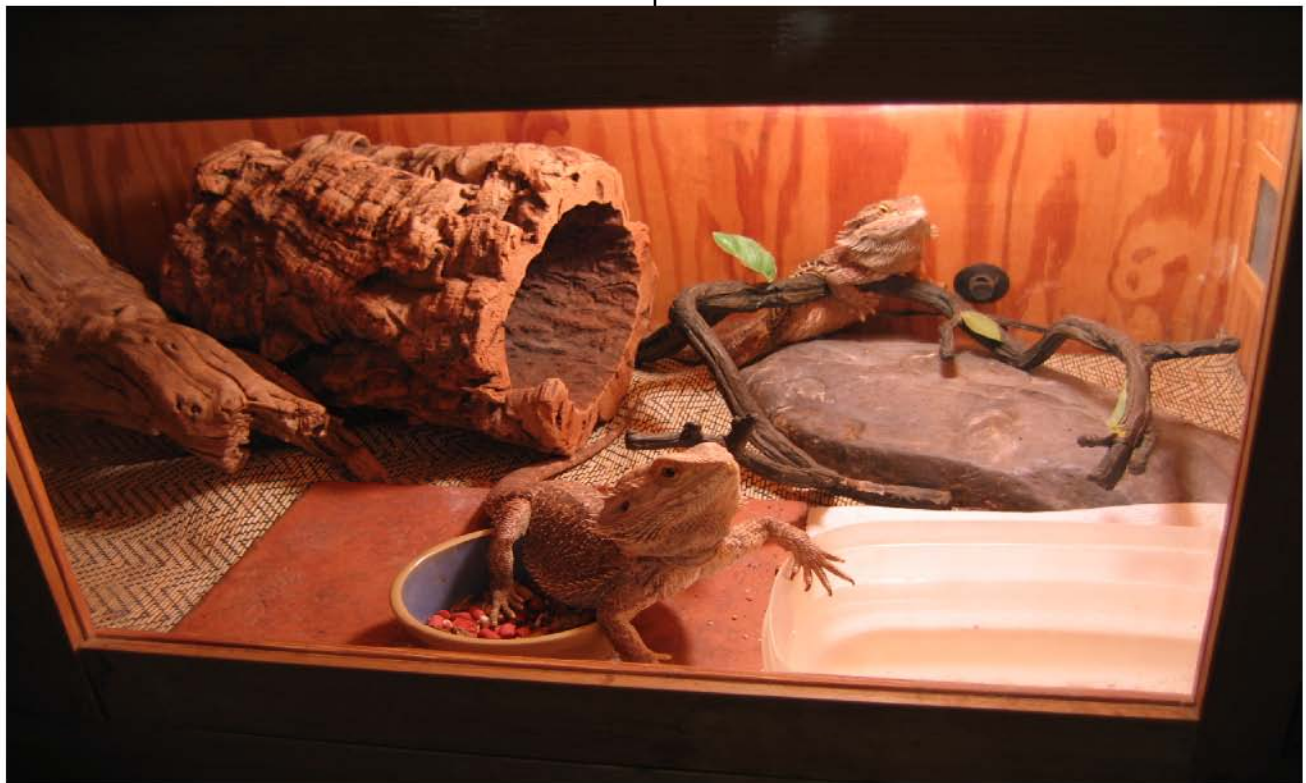
[REF #6701] male/female pair **Bearded Dragons**, 7 yrs old. Male 18", female 16". Healthy & really sweet. Male has some yellow w/orange around his eyes. Very tame- loves to hang out on shoulders, go outside (he will wear a harness), and take baths. The female is a little shy of people- if you try to pick her up she will run away and hiss, but once you do pick her up, she calms down and will hang out with you. She has some sort of problem that makes it hard for her to catch live food; her eye-mouth coordination seems to be a bit off. Just make sure she's getting enough to eat (not really an issue as they will eat just about anything).
Current Diet: pellets, freeze dried insects, greens, veggies, fruits, flowers, cactus, etc. Come with huge amount of accessories including liner for the bottom of the cage, a sandbox, water bowl, rocks and wood to climb in/under, food dishes, heat lamp, UVB light, supply of dry food, separate 10 gal. tank w/lid for keeping crickets, a mealworm colony, etc. Also have two other cages I am selling & would sell to an adoptee very cheap: 80 gallon- 18" by 48" and 20" tall w/screen lid. Other is a high quality 2' by 4' wood & glass cage shown below. Currently in San Martin.

[REF #6702] several **Baby Ribbon Snakes**, 1 yr old that need a new home. Born in captivity on 6/21/07 (last count, there are 9 of them).
Diet: Feeder Fish

[REF #6705] **Young green iguana**, about 2ft l. (including tail - about 8" SVL) A rescue- not currently handleable - very fast and runs whenever you get close enough to touch him. He's begin-ning to notice that I bring him his meals and he has recently allowed me to get within just a few inches of him without running away. So this one is going to require someone with some patience to work with him.
Location: Currently in foster care in San Jose.

The animal adoptions listed herein are for the prospective benefit of BAARS club members as adoptees.

No guarantees as to the health, suitability or legality of the adopted animals as pets, is either expressed nor implied.



LARGEST CANE TOAD EVER FOUND IN AUSTRALIA



[✉ Email to a Friend](#)

[More Photos in the News](#)

This monster, recently caught in a pond in south Australia, weighed over two pounds and was more than 15 inches long. (National Geographic photo courtesy of Valerie Haecky)

THE BAY AREA AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE SOCIETY
PALO ALTO JR MUSEUM, 1451 MIDDLEFIELD ROAD
PALO ALTO, CA 94301



[HTTP://WWW.BAARS.ORG](http://www.baars.org)